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## Editorial

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## Editorial

Jennifer Pastorini (Editor)

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In 1986 the Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) published its first newsletter. In the first editorial Lyn de Alwis commented that the group felt there was a lack of communication regarding new scientific material and technical know-how. The newsletter was to address this deficiency.

Lyn de Alwis, later together with Charles Santiapillai put together 15 newsletters in 10 years. In 1992 the newsletter switched to the name *Gajah*. In 1996 Charles Santiapillai took over the editorship, publishing 10 *Gajahs* in the next 10 years. In 2007 Jayantha Jayewardene became the editor for *Gajah*. He managed to publish two issues every year, so putting together 16 *Gajahs* in 8 years.

Over the years *Gajah* has grown in size (more articles per issue), published more regularly, and become available for free download on the AsESG website. *Gajah* now publishes research articles, short communications, news items, a compilation of abstracts from scientific papers and a selection of news clippings to inform its readership about elephant related issues.

Of course there is always room for improvement. However, as Lyn de Alwis stated in that very first editorial, all members of the AsESG need to get actively involved.



We definitely should have more news items. Reports from workshops, meetings etc. related to Asian elephants would be most welcome. If a meeting is open for all to participate, why not announce it in *Gajah*? If the workshop/meeting was only for invited attendants, you could inform other “elephant people” about its purpose and important outputs. Even if we can’t go to all the meetings, we as members of the AsESG would like to hear about what is going on.

We should also have more reports from elephant events in the news section. A cultural procession where elephants play a main part, annual elephant festivals, special events with elephants etc. This could basically be a picture page with a very short text to it, explaining the event. I feel that even if some of us may not agree with the use of elephants in such contexts, we as members of the AsESG at least should hear about them.

The short communication section could also be used more widely by the AsESG members. What I find particularly lacking is, that if something new was tried out and it turned out to be a failure, it is very rarely communicated to others. Why not report in detail why and how you tried a new method and describe how it failed? Others can then (if funds are limited) avoid doing the same thing and the more adventurous ones can start improving right from the start, hopefully getting the idea working in the second attempt.

And then of course there are the research papers. Authors are encouraged to write up their work as a proper paper with introduction (why and where), methods (what exactly was done), results (what happened) and discussion (try to explain the results, compare with other studies). One of the main purposes of *Gajah* should be to encourage and build the capacity of range country scientists, managers and workers to publish their

work. Therefore the editorial team will be more than happy to help authors, who are not very experienced in writing such papers to shape up their work. Editing the English is no issue at all. So please give it a try!

We have now also introduced a peer-reviewed section for authors who need their work to be peer-reviewed. This often matters in academia when applying for new jobs. *Gajah* doesn't want to loose out on such papers. Of course, peer-reviewed papers will be held to a higher standard and the authors will have to do more work on them.

I would also encourage readers to send in comments on any articles published in *Gajah*. We are a diverse group and we do not have to hold the same view on any matter. It is good to have a lively discussion and tackle contentious issues. Scientific debate would further the cause and make the group more active.

*Gajah* has been struggling to get enough articles (any section) to complete the next issue.

Therefore, I would like to request all members of the AsESG and our readership to submit a text or to look out for people doing something interesting on elephants and encourage them to write it up for *Gajah*. Remember that you do not have to be a member of the AsESG to publish in *Gajah*.

We are also hoping for more contributions from professional researchers. There are now so many journals out there to choose from. *Gajah's* main advantages are that it is an established journal and that it is entirely free, both for the authors and the readers. And please cite *Gajah* articles when publishing in other journals, so people who do not know about *Gajah* come across such citations and join our readership.

In short, *Gajah* should be packed with relevant news to keep the AsESG members up to date with what is happening in the "elephant world" and full of interesting articles for all scientists or conservationists working on Asian elephants. The more we know about Asian elephants, the better we can protect them!



Elephant herd in Manas National Park (India) - See article by Naba K. Nath *et al.* on page 15